

A N A T I O N A L S T R A T E G Y



Increasing Booster Seat Use for 4- to 8-Year-Old Children

October 2002



4 S T E P S F O R K I D S

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for children of every age from 5 to 14. This fact can be linked in part to the nonuse or improper use of child safety seats.



NHTSA's 4 STEPS FOR KIDS program promotes the correct use of child safety seats at different stages in a child's development, as shown in the 4-STEP logo. This publication focuses on the third stage—booster seats.

When children out-grow forward-facing child safety seats, they need to be restrained in belt-positioning booster seats. This usually occurs when children are about 4 years old and weigh approximately 40 pounds. To ensure children's safety, they should remain in booster seats until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4' 9" tall.

E X E C U T I V E S U M M A R Y

Reformulated Objectives & Goals for 2006

To measure progress of its expanded program to increase all restraint use among 4- to 8-year-olds, while promoting booster seat use, NHTSA developed the following new objectives and goals for 2006.

1

Objective 1: Increase restraint use by 4- to 8-year-old passenger vehicle occupants.

2006 Goal: Increase restraint use by 4- to 8-year-old occupants to 85 percent (from 63 percent in 1999).

2

Objective 2: Reduce the percentage of unrestrained 4- to 8-year-old passenger vehicle occupant fatalities.

Goal for 2006: Reduce the percentage of unrestrained 4- to 8-year-old occupants that die in passenger vehicle crashes to 39 percent (from 63 percent in 1999).

Under Section 14(i) of the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act, the Secretary of Transportation is required to, "...develop [a] 5 year strategic plan to reduce deaths and injuries caused by failure to use the appropriate booster seat in the 4 to 8 year old age group by 25 percent." While this is a highly desirable goal, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) research shows that a 25 percent reduction in deaths and injuries would not be attainable through the implementation of a program designed solely to increase proper use of belt-positioning booster seats. This view is borne out by the following data:

- Virtually 100 percent restraint use by booster seat age children would be necessary to achieve a 25 percent reduction in total fatalities for this age group; and,
- Only about 21 percent of 4- to 8-year-old children are reported as unrestrained in non-fatal crashes. Therefore, the number of unrestrained children is insufficient to produce a 25 percent reduction in the number of injured children, even if all were restrained.

The Agency's research also shows that the lack of any restraint use in a motor vehicle is the greatest risk to 4- to 8-year-old passengers. In 2000, almost half of the 4- to 8-year-old passengers killed in crashes were reported as totally unrestrained. In addition to the high number of fatalities, thousands of children were seriously injured in crashes because they were unrestrained.

Persuading parents who do not restrain their children at all to place them in any kind of occupant restraint would reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured. Providing additional protection to these children from belt-positioning booster seats would further enhance their overall safety. Therefore, NHTSA has broadened the scope of its booster seat program to include increasing restraint use, in general, among 4- to 8-year-old children.

The Strategic Plan

In public meetings and through written comments, citizens from across the country contributed their ideas for this strategic plan. Its purpose is to provide a blueprint for decreasing the number of children who ride unrestrained and promoting the use of booster seats for children ages 4 to 8. In so doing, the plan provides the Agency's recommended guidelines for booster seat use.

All children who have outgrown child safety seats should be properly restrained in booster seats until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4'9" tall.

Children are large enough for a lap and shoulder belt when they can sit against the vehicle seat back cushion with their knees bent over the vehicle seat cushion.

The proposed framework of this national strategic plan builds on NHTSA's current Buckle Up America (BUA) campaign, which has been extremely successful in increasing the use of child safety seats for children from birth

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

through 4 years of age and reducing fatalities and injuries in this age group. The elements of the BUA campaign are: (1) public-private partnerships; (2) strong legislation; (3) active, high-visibility law enforcement; and (4) effective public education.

The plan contains specific activities that individuals representing a variety of public and private sector organizations and groups can undertake. These activities range from the conduct of public information and awareness programs about restraint use and booster seats, to the upgrading of child passenger safety laws. They address the need for training, technical assistance, and outreach, as well as the need for enforcement and resource allocation in support of child occupant restraint use. Specific activities are identified for groups that fall under the following categories:

- Congress
- Federal Government agencies
- State and local agencies and organizations
- National organizations and coalitions
- Health and medical providers
- Child safety seat manufacturers and retailers
- Child passenger safety technicians
- Media
- Educators
- Law enforcement
- Businesses
- Private citizens

To provide a context for increased activities, the plan highlights the broad base of support for child passenger safety that exists across the country. NHTSA's public and private sector partners have incorporated messages and best practices information about the lifesaving benefits of booster seats throughout their wide-ranging child passenger safety programming and communications activities. States and communities have received funding for some of these programs and activities through a number of highway safety grants that are funded under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

Meeting the Challenge

There are numerous challenges to getting 4- to 8-year-old children secured in booster seats. These range from the lack of information among parents and other caregivers about: (1) the correct progression of restraint use for children, (2) how booster seats work, and (3) the safety benefits of booster seats, to the inconsistency of State laws pertaining to protecting older children and booster seat use. Without consistent laws, or laws that provide for mandatory booster seat use for an older child, parents and other caregivers will continue to question the need for, and benefits of, booster seats.

To address the many aspects of these challenges, NHTSA and its public and private sector partners must continue to promote passenger safety for all motor vehicle occupants. However, we must ultimately rely on parents and other caregivers to take responsibility for placing 4- to 8-year-old children in booster seats when they ride in motor vehicles.

Objective 3: Reduce the severity of injuries to 4- to 8-year-old passenger vehicle occupants involved in motor vehicle crashes [Data to measure this objective comes from two different databases, Crashworthiness Data System (CDS) and General Estimate System (GES); therefore, there are two goals for this objective].

CDS Goal for 2006: Reduce the number of moderate to severe injuries per 100,000 4- to 8-year-old passenger vehicle occupants involved in motor vehicle crashes to 1,050 (from 1,509 in 1999).

GES Goal for 2006: Reduce the number of incapacitating injuries per 100,000 4- to 8-year-old passenger vehicle occupants to 5,700 (from 6,540 in 1999).

P R E F A C E

On November 1, 2000, Congress enacted the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act, Public Law 106-414, which contains provisions on improving the performance of child restraints. Under Section 14(i), “Improving the Safety of Child Restraints – Booster Seat Education Program,” the TREAD Act mandates that the “Secretary of Transportation within 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act develop [a] 5 year strategic plan to reduce deaths and injuries caused by failure to use the appropriate booster seat in the 4 to 8 year old age group by 25 percent.” The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), as the designated agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation, has developed a plan in response to this requirement.

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Educate the public about the dangers children face when they ride unrestrained, and the importance of having all appropriate-size booster-seat-age children protected by belt-positioning booster seats when they are passenger vehicle occupants.

Over the past several years, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and its partners in the private and public sectors have made a concerted effort to promote the use of child safety seats through public education, enforcement, and strong legislation. As a result, the Nation has seen a dramatic increase in child restraint use for infants and toddlers, a reduction in fatalities and injuries, and the saving of countless lives.

Without State occupant restraint laws requiring drivers to place children younger than the age of 4 years in child safety seats, these increases would not have been as great. Unfortunately, most of these laws do not address the need to place children ages 4 to 8 years¹ (who are too big for child safety seats, yet too small to ride safely in adult seat belts) in booster seats. In many instances, loopholes in State laws allow children to ride unrestrained in the back seat.

The greatest risk to child passengers 4- to 8-years of age is the lack of any restraint use in a motor vehicle. In 1999, more than half of the 4- to 8-year-old passengers killed in crashes were reported as totally unrestrained. In addition to the high number of fatalities, thousands of children were seriously injured in crashes because they were unrestrained. Persuading parents who do not restrain their children at all to place them in any kind of restraint would reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured. Providing additional protection to these children using belt-positioning booster seats would enhance their overall safety.

Therefore, as the public is educated about the importance of age/size appropriate belt-positioning booster seats, it is imperative that they are aware of the dangers children face when they ride unrestrained. Societal norms must change, making it socially unacceptable to place children at unnecessary risk by allowing them to ride unrestrained in a moving vehicle.

The passage of the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act provides the U.S. Department of Transportation with a new opportunity to educate the public about the dangers children face when they ride unrestrained, and the importance of having all appropriate-size booster-seat-age children protected by belt-positioning booster seats when they are passenger vehicle occupants.

National Participation in Plan Development

On June 6, 2001, NHTSA published a Federal Register Notice announcing a Public Meeting and Request for Comments To Address the Development of a Booster Seat Education Plan (www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a010606c.html). NHTSA conducted a public meeting on July 10, 2001, which brought together nearly 100 participants and speakers to provide a forum for sharing viewpoints, information, ideas, and recommendations to

¹ The term "4 to 8 years" refers to children who are 4, 5, 6, and 7 years old.

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increase booster seat use. The attendees and presenters represented the general public, industry, government, child advocacy groups, and child restraint manufacturers. Comments also were received at the public docket (<http://dms.dot.gov> – docket number 9785). The information gleaned from these two forums was the starting point for the strategic plan.

Additional Contributions to Plan Development

NHTSA reviewed recommendations and goals from other arenas during preparation of the plan, including the following:

- November 1999 report of the Blue Ribbon Panel II, Protecting Our Older Child Passengers (http://www.actsinc.org/whatsnew_6.html)
- Child Restraint System Safety Plan of November 27, 2000 (<http://dot.dms.gov> – docket number 7938)
- December 2000 National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Booster Seat Use: Government and Industry To Announce New Child Safety Initiatives recommendations (<http://www.nts.gov>)
- Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine (AAAM) April 23-24, 2001, meeting on Booster Seats for Children: Closing the Gap Between Science and Public Policy (www.carcash.org)
- Child Passenger Protection Act of 2001 (S. 980), introduced by Senators Peter G. Fitzgerald (R-IL) and Byron Dorgan (D-ND) on May 26, 2001 (<http://thomas.loc.gov>)

A Summary of the Issues Raised for Inclusion in Plan Development

NHTSA solicited and received national input, reviewed salient documents addressing child passenger safety, and conducted meetings with individuals involved with child passenger safety at the national and local levels. Combining this information with the Agency's expansive research capabilities and years of experience in child passenger safety, NHTSA identified several recurring issues:

- A large percentage of fatalities in this age group are unrestrained;
- The lack of public awareness of the risks to child passengers 4- to 8-years of age and the use of age/size appropriate restraints;
- The need to reach numerous audiences, such as parents, caregivers, enforcement officers, health care providers, and other influencers (e.g., child care providers and teachers);

Reach numerous audiences

Use clear consistent messages

Address multilingual audiences

Pass strong enforceable laws

I N T R O D U C T I O N

- The need to develop outreach and educational programs that have clear, consistent messages and address multilingual/multicultural audiences; and
- The importance of strong, enforceable laws and support for enforcement.

Within the above mentioned issues, specific recommendations included:

(1) tailoring messages for high-risk populations; (2) establishing a best-practices approach for all outreach and programmatic activities; (3) passing laws requiring lap and shoulder belts in all seating positions in motor vehicles; and (4) informing the public that when a booster seat is unavailable, a child should be placed in a seat belt in the back seat. There was also strong support for NHTSA to continue providing incentive grants to States to increase age/size appropriate restraint use.

A Blueprint for the Nation

The purpose of the national strategy is to provide a blueprint for increasing the number of children ages 4 to 8 who are secured in booster seats. The proposed framework of the strategy builds on NHTSA's current Buckle Up America (BUA) campaign, which has been extremely successful in increasing the use of child safety seats for children from birth through 4 years of age, and reducing fatalities and injuries. The elements of the BUA campaign are: (1) public-private partnerships; (2) strong legislation; (3) active, high-visibility law enforcement; and (4) effective public education.

This plan is divided into five sections:

Reformulating the TREAD Objective

The Challenge of Getting Children Placed in Booster Seats

A Strategic Approach Built on the Successes of the BUA Campaign

Work in Progress

A National Movement for Change—Implementing the Strategic Approach

S E C T I O N O N E

Reformulating the
TREAD Objective



Under Section 14(i) of the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act, the Secretary of Transportation is required to, "...develop [a] 5 year strategic plan to reduce deaths and injuries caused by failure to use the appropriate booster seat in the 4 to 8 year old age group by 25 percent." While it is highly desirable to "...reduce fatalities and injuries caused by failure to use the appropriate booster seat in the 4 to 8 year old age group by 25 percent," NHTSA does not believe this to be an attainable objective. This belief was corroborated by an examination of 10 years of fatal and injury crash data involving 4- to 8-year-old passengers². The examination of the crash data revealed that:

- Virtually 100 percent restraint use by booster seat age children would be needed to achieve a 25 percent reduction in the total number of fatalities. Achieving 100 percent use within a 5-year time frame is an unrealistic objective and,
- Even achieving 100 percent restraint use would not result in a 25 percent reduction in the number of children injured. Only about 21 percent of children 4-to 8-years old are reported as unrestrained in non-fatal crashes. While this high use rate may reflect the over-reporting of restraint use common in police-reported data, the number of unrestrained children is insufficient to produce a 25 percent reduction in the number of injured children, even if all were restrained.

NHTSA believes that its programs should focus on attainable objectives. Because the crash data show that a program designed solely to increase use of belt-positioning booster seats would not result in a 25 percent reduction in the number of booster seat age children killed and injured in passenger vehicle crashes, it would not be an attainable objective.

The Agency's research also shows that the lack of any restraint use in a motor vehicle is the greatest risk to 4- to 8-year-old passengers. In 2000, almost half of the 4- to 8-year-old passengers killed in crashes were reported as totally unrestrained. In addition to the high number of fatalities, thousands of children were seriously injured in crashes because they were unrestrained. NHTSA research has shown that the use of adult belts alone by a booster seat age child reduces his/her risk of fatality by 48 percent (in the back seat) and that the use of a belt-positioning booster seat reduces the child's risk of being killed in a crash by 54 percent³. This 6 percent improvement, though significant, is marginal when compared to the 48 percent gain realized by restraining a child in a lap/shoulder belt alone over not restraining the child at all. Thus, while it must be kept in mind that increasing booster seat use to 100 percent is NHTSA's ultimate goal, the greatest gain in occupant protection for this age group would be obtained by getting unrestrained child passengers into any form of occupant restraint.

² Based on data used in the report, *Fatalities and Injuries to 0-8 Year Old Passenger Vehicle Occupants based on Impact Attributes*, DOT HS 809 410, March 2002.

³ Based on data used in the report, *Effectiveness of Lap/Shoulder Belts in the Back Outboard Seating Positions*, DOT HS 808 945, June 1999.

Therefore, the objective of NHTSA's program will be to reduce the number of unrestrained booster seat age children (placing them into any form of occupant restraint), while emphasizing that booster seats are the best and proper restraints for children in this age group. Such a program, while not completely departing from the objectives of the TREAD Act, reformulates them.

To measure progress towards the success of a program to eliminate non-restraint use among 4- to 8-year-olds and promote booster seat use, NHTSA proposes the following goal:

2006 Goal: Increase restraint use (of any type) by 4- to 8-year-old occupants to 85 percent (from 63 percent in 1999), as measured by the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS).

An increase in restraint use (booster seat or otherwise) should result in a reduction in the number of 4- to 8-year-old children killed or seriously injured in motor vehicle crashes. NHTSA's program, therefore, will include the following goals to track the effect of increasing restraint use on fatalities and injuries to booster seat age children:

Goal for 2006: Reduce the percentage of unrestrained 4- to 8-year-old occupants that die in passenger vehicle crashes to 39 percent (from 63 percent in 1999), as measured by the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS).

Goal for 2006: Reduce the number of moderate to severe injuries per 100,000 4- to 8-year-old passenger vehicle occupants involved in motor vehicle crashes to 1,050 (from 1,509 in 1999), as measured by the National Automotive Sampling System (NASS) Crashworthiness Data System (CDS).⁴

Goal for 2006: Reduce the number of incapacitating injuries 4- to 8-year-old passenger vehicle occupants per 100,000 to 5,700 (from 6,540 in 1999), as measured by the NASS System General Estimate System (GES).⁵

Persuading parents who do not restrain their children at all to place them in any kind of occupant restraint would reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured. Providing additional protection to these children from belt-positioning booster seats would further enhance their overall safety.

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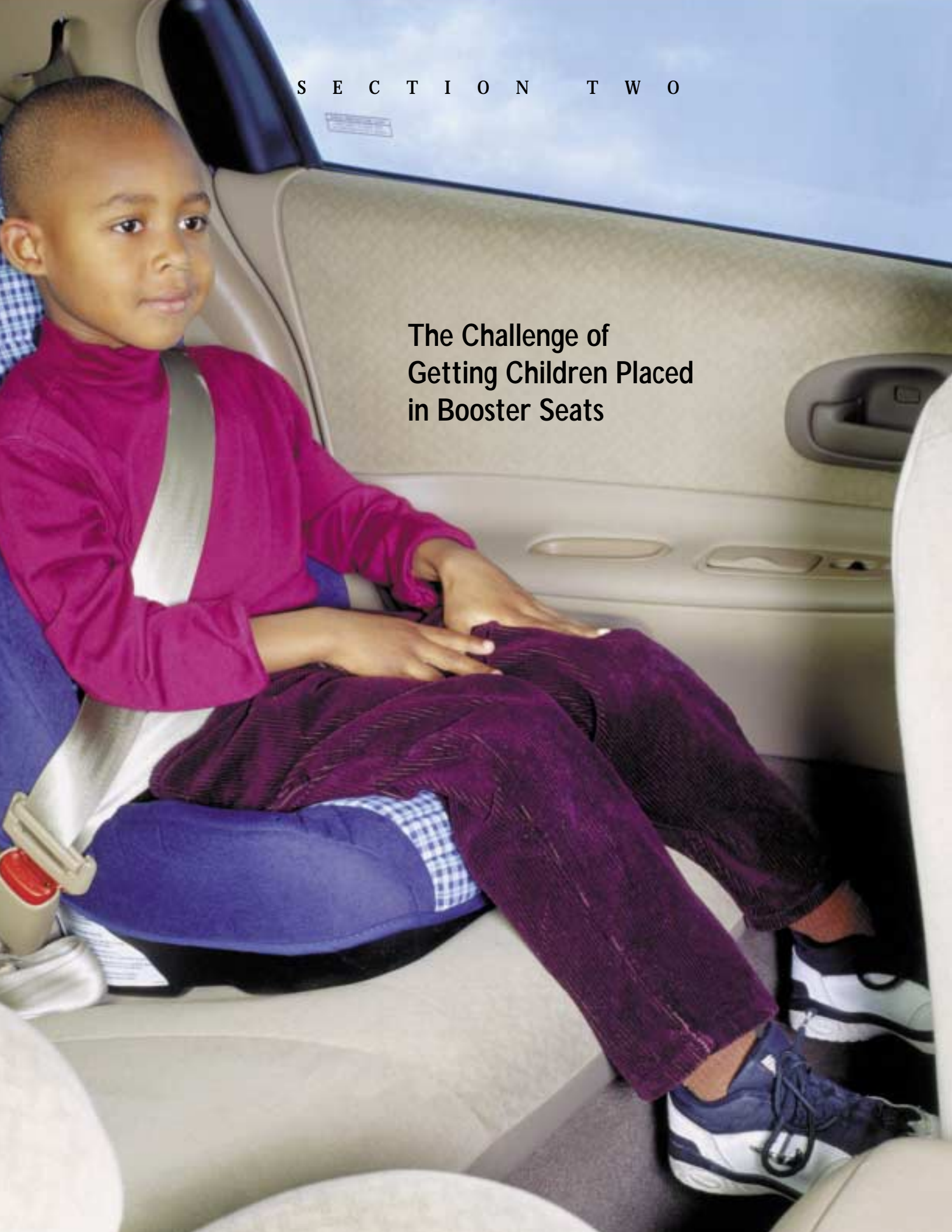
Goal for 2006: Reduce the number of incapacitating injuries 4- to 8-year-old passenger vehicle occupants per 100,000 to 5,700 (from 6,540 in 1999), as measured by the NASS System General Estimate System (GES).

⁴ The NASS CDS examines medical records and classifies all injuries to occupants by severity – AIS 1 (least severe) to AIS 6 (most severe or non-survivable).

⁵ The NASS GES uses the KABCO scale: K- killed, A- serious or incapacitating, B- non-incapacitating, C- possible injury or complaint of pain, O- not injured.

S E C T I O N T W O

The Challenge of Getting Children Placed in Booster Seats



There are numerous challenges to getting 4- to 8-year-old children secured in booster seats, in addition to the many situational factors that affect booster seat use. The first challenge is the lack of information among parents and other caregivers about: (1) the correct progression of restraint use for children; (2) how booster seats work; and (3) the safety benefits of booster seats. The second challenge is the desire of young children to act grown up and not have to sit in any type of child restraint. A third challenge is the inconsistency of State laws pertaining to protecting older children and booster seat use. Without consistent laws, or laws that provide for mandatory booster seat use for the older child, parents and other caregivers will continue to question the need for, and benefits of, booster seats.

Finally, even though lap belts and shoulder belts for front-seat occupants have been required in cars for more than 30 years, NHTSA did not require combination lap and shoulder belts in the rear outboard seating positions until 1989 (vehicle model year 1990). While the presence of lap-only belts did not preclude manufacturers from offering various restraint systems for older children, shield booster seats (designed for use with lap-only belts) were the only type of booster seat available at the time. Once NHTSA required shoulder belt restraints for the rear seating positions, child safety seat manufacturers responded by developing belt-positioning booster seats. Hence, belt-positioning booster seats have only recently been available.

The need to educate parents and caregivers on the correct progression of restraint use is illustrated in NHTSA research conducted by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Researchers found that "while parents generally do a good job of restraining children who are under age 3 and over 8, the number of appropriately restrained children between ages 3 and 8 drops significantly. Instead of using car seats or belt-positioning booster seats, many of these children are inappropriately restrained in adult seat belts (see chart)."⁶

In another study conducted by CHOP, parents identified potential barriers to using booster seats, including the child's behavior and discomfort. They also found that, due in part to peer pressure, children often balk at being in a child safety seat as they get older. These studies also note that increasing booster seat use is difficult because parents are confused by a patchwork of child occupant protection laws with inconsistent provisions.

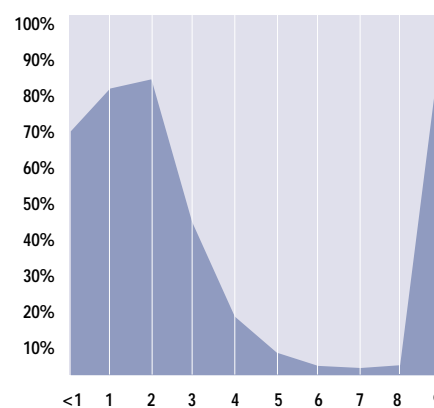
Ultimately, we must rely on parents and other caregivers to take responsibility for placing 4- to 8-year-olds in booster seats when they ride in motor vehicles. To address the many aspects of this challenge, NHTSA and its public and private sector partners must continue to promote passenger safety for all motor vehicle occupants. We must create and maintain a cultural norm that equates children's safety with placing 4- to 8-year-olds in age/size appropriate occupant restraints. In doing so, and recognizing that proper fit of booster seats does not solely depend on age, NHTSA makes the following recommendations about booster seat use: "all children who have outgrown child safety seats should be properly restrained in booster seats until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4'9" tall." Children can move to a seat belt when they can firmly place their back against the vehicle seat back cushion with their knees bent over the vehicle seat cushion.

Lack of information among parents and other caregivers

Children's attitude toward child restraints

Inconsistency of State laws

Compliance With Recommended Restraints by Age



⁶ Winston, et al., *The Premature Graduation of Children from Child Restraints to Vehicle Safety Belts*. DOT HS 809 259, 2001, p.18.

S E C T I O N T H R E E

A Strategic
Approach Built
on the Successes
of The Buckle
Up America
Campaign



NHTSA proposes to model its strategic approach for promoting protecting older child passengers and increasing the use of booster seats after the four elements of the BUA campaign. These elements are: (1) public-private partnerships, (2) strong legislation, (3) active, high-visibility law enforcement, and (4) effective public education. Under the BUA campaign, combining these four elements into a strategic approach was so successful that the campaign reached its child passenger safety goal one year early. It reduced child occupant fatalities among children age 4 and younger by 15 percent in 1999 instead of the target date of 2000.

Public-Private Partnerships

Over the past several years, NHTSA has helped form a cadre of strong partnerships with public and private organizations that have contributed time, millions of dollars, and other resources to promote child passenger safety. Partner contributions have included promoting and disseminating child passenger safety messages, providing child safety seats to local loaner programs, and establishing a network of fitting/inspection stations. NHTSA will work with existing partners and bring on new ones to assist in increasing booster seat use.

Strong Legislation

Although every State has a child occupant protection law, some laws include only very young children (some cover only ages 2 and younger) and some only cover passengers riding in the front seat. Some States exempt pickup trucks and vans. Child occupant protection laws should cover every child (up to age 16), in every seating position, in every passenger vehicle.

To close the gaps in child occupant protection laws, NHTSA will continue to provide sound scientific data and technical assistance that will make it easier for States and communities to enact and strengthen legislation (and ordinances) to address the need to place all children in occupant protection restraints, emphasizing securing 4- to 8-year-olds in booster seats.

Active, High-Visibility Law Enforcement

A commitment to enforcing child occupant protection laws does not require extensive training on correct use. An officer need only observe a child who is at risk and do something about it. To ensure that children ride safely, law enforcement should take action on every child restraint law violation they see. Law enforcement officers are in a unique position to educate the public about the importance of securing children in age/size appropriate occupant restraints and about always seating children in the back seat of motor vehicles.

Therefore, NHTSA will continue to encourage law enforcement agencies to enforce child occupant protection laws and to educate the public about the importance of securing children in age/size appropriate occupant restraints.



Public-Private
Partnerships

Strong Legislation

Active, High-Visibility
Law Enforcement

Effective Public
Education

Under the BUA campaign, combining these four elements into a strategic approach was so successful that the campaign reached one of its national goals a year early.

Effective Public Education

Public education, especially when combined with enforcement, plays an integral role in any effort to encourage people to acquire new habits and behaviors. Public education includes a broad range of activities, such as high-visibility enforcement campaigns, promotional events, and community-based initiatives. Through these activities, public education can raise awareness about the dangers children face when they ride unrestrained and promote the benefits of age/size appropriate occupant restraints. However, to be effective, these activities must be well planned and well coordinated.

National campaigns

Instructional programs at schools and inspection stations

One-on-one discussions delivered by health care professionals or child-care workers

To educate the public about the benefits of using and the proper fit of booster seats, activities can range from national campaigns, to instructional programs at schools and fitting/inspection stations, to one-on-one discussions delivered by health care professionals or childcare workers. The crucial element is that the public receive a single, simple message - often and in many different ways. As appropriate media and channels for educating the public about booster seats are identified, NHTSA will build on existing child passenger safety programs and initiatives and identify the need for new strategic ones.

Tracking and Monitoring

To monitor successes and activities in each strategic area, NHTSA will use a variety of information gathering and data analysis techniques. To measure the goals and the objectives, NHTSA will use data from FARS, GES, NASS, CDS, and NOPUS. It also will monitor trends in booster seat use through its household and observational surveys, and it will collect information on the following types of activity:

- New and upgraded State legislation on child passenger safety;
- Establishment of new fitting/inspection stations;
- Increases in partner activities promoting booster seat use;
- Collaboration with new strategic partners;
- Production of new booster seats;
- Law enforcement participation in national Operation ABC (America Buckles up Children) mobilizations;
- New research on the effects of premature graduation to adult seat belts; and
- The National Child Passenger Safety training program.

NHTSA will use a variety of information gathering and data analysis techniques. The Agency will monitor trends in booster seat use through its household and observational surveys.

S E C T I O N F O U R

Work in Progress



The promotion of booster seats has been an important part of the BUA campaign's child passenger safety activities. For the past several years, NHTSA, its partners, and the private sector have incorporated messages, statistics, and best practices information about the lifesaving benefits of booster seats throughout their wide-ranging child passenger safety programming and communications activities.

These child passenger safety initiatives have included a special focus on reaching traditionally underserved populations. NHTSA will continue this focus as it expands these initiatives to promote the use of booster seats. The following information highlights current efforts that promote the correct progression of occupant restraint use for children.

4 Steps For Kids Campaign

Describes proper fit for each type of restraint system infant seat, child seat, booster seat, and adult seat belt.

Public Awareness and Education



- 4 Steps for Kids is a NHTSA marketing campaign currently in operation to promote the proper use of each type of restraint.
- In partnership with the Advertising Council, Inc., NHTSA is developing a national media campaign about booster seats.
- Private sector partnerships, such as the "SAFE KIDS BUCKLE UP" program supported by General Motors and DaimlerChrysler's "Fit for a Kid" campaign, support NHTSA in educating the public about the importance of using age/size appropriate child restraints. NHTSA also has been a close partner in the development and refinement of the "Boost America!" program sponsored by Ford Motor Company, which distributed newly developed preschool and early elementary school curricula (in conjunction with Nickelodeon) promoting booster seat use. In recent years, other private sector supported Child Passenger Safety (CPS) programs have been developed by Nissan North America, Volkswagen of America, State Farm Insurance, and AAA.
- High-visibility activities are conducted nationwide annually during CPS Week in mid-February to heighten public awareness about the importance of correct child safety seat use. NHTSA develops educational, outreach, and media materials to support efforts conducted by advocates at the local level. Booster seat use was at the core of the 2000 and 2001 programs. In 2002/03, the materials will continue to reinforce the importance of booster seat use using the 4 Steps For Kids approach. This approach emphasizes the correct ages, weights, and heights at which children can safely transition from each type of restraint system—infant seat, child seat, booster seat, and adult seat belt.
- For the past several years, in May and November, the Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign (a national non-profit organization supported financially by the insurance companies, the automobile industry, and air bag manufacturers), in partnership with NHTSA and the States, has conducted high-

visibility, stepped-up law enforcement mobilizations to enforce seat belt and child passenger safety laws. NHTSA supports the national Operation ABC mobilizations by engaging its network of partner organizations to conduct activities, disseminate information, and organize publicity to increase awareness of law enforcement efforts to protect children and the importance of age/size appropriate child restraint systems.



- NHTSA is developing bilingual and culturally appropriate child passenger safety intervention strategies, and educational materials for Spanish-speaking families, in conjunction with the National Latino Children's Institute and other highly regarded Hispanic organizations. Increasing booster seat use is an integral part of this effort.

- NHTSA is reproducing a brochure titled "Keep Your Child Safe While Traveling," developed by the Injury

Prevention Program at United Tribes Technical College. The brochure includes information about all child safety seat systems, including booster seats. It is designed specifically for Native Americans and is available through NHTSA's Web site (www.nhtsa.dot.gov) and print materials catalog.



- Four booklets ("A Parent's Guide to Booster Seats," "Are You Using It Right?," "Child Transportation Safety Tips," and "Buying A Safer Car For Child Passengers, 2002") provide parents and other caregivers with important information about age/size appropriate child restraints, the correct use of child restraints, and the benefits of occupant protection. NHTSA and its partner organizations in the child passenger advocacy community distribute these materials throughout the country.
- NHTSA will continue to produce educational videos on topics such as child safety seats and booster seats, youth occupant protection, airbag safety, and adult occupant protection.
- NHTSA's Web site has a separate section devoted to child passenger safety. It serves as a public information resource on appropriate child passenger restraints, proper installation of child restraints, and where to find local fitting/inspection stations. Included are dozens of full-color photographs of booster seats and other types of child safety seats with step-by-step installation guidelines. All NHTSA educational publications are available on the NHTSA Web site.
- NHTSA's toll-free hotline [1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236)] is staffed by operators who provide answers to a variety of questions, including child passenger safety.

NHTSA's Hotline
1-888-327-4236

All NHTSA educational publications are available on the NHTSA Web site:
www.nhtsa.dot.gov

www.nhtsa.dot.gov

THE CHILD
PASSENGER SAFETY
MODEL LAW
provides States with
specific guidelines
for developing and
revising child occupant
protection laws.

THE NATIONAL
CHILD PASSENGER
SAFETY BOARD
provides guidance to
States, organizations,
and others wishing
to implement child
passenger safety
training programs to
benefit the public.

OPERATION KIDS is
a training program
developed by NHTSA
and administered by
the International
Association of Chiefs
of Police. The program
teaches law enforce-
ment officers about
child passenger safety.

Training and Technical Assistance

- A Model Occupant Restraint Law (02/06/01) was developed in partnership with the National Transportation Safety Board, the Governors Highway Safety Association, and the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances. The model law provides States with specific guidelines for developing and revising child occupant protection laws.
- The National Child Passenger Safety Board represents a partnership between State governments and private sector organizations. The purpose of the board is to manage the implementation of the NHTSA Standardized CPS Training and AAA Certification Program. The 19-member board provides guidance to States, organizations, and others wishing to implement child passenger safety training programs to benefit the public.
- More than 32,000 child passenger safety technicians have undergone at least 32 hours of CPS training and certification to become eligible to install child safety seats and educate parents and other caregivers on the proper installation of appropriate safety restraints for children. This program, funded through a cooperative agreement between NHTSA and the National Safety Council, and administered by the States, will continue to provide additional training opportunities (to include more diverse populations) and to maintain an up-to-date training curriculum. There are also programs underway to increase the number of Hispanic and other minority CPS technicians.
- Through its partnership with the U.S. Indian Health Service, NHTSA is supporting CPS training and technical assistance programs for tribal representatives. This training and technical assistance includes information on booster seats.
- Operation Kids is a training program developed by NHTSA and administered by the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The program teaches law enforcement officers about child passenger safety including general information about child occupant protection laws and the proper use of all child safety seats.

Outreach

- A fitting/inspection station is a place where parents and other caregivers can go to learn how to properly install child safety seats and booster seats. NHTSA is developing a best practices planning guide for States and organizations that wish to establish permanent fitting/inspection stations. Many States have already established fitting/inspection stations with incentive funds made available through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).
- NHTSA is developing a booklet titled "Protecting America's Children: The Case for Strong Child Occupant Protection Laws" to help States and communities close gaps in State child occupant protection laws. The booklet will include a copy of the Model Child Restraint Use Law, which is designed to make State laws consistent with recommended best practices.

- The Ford Motor Company's "Boost America!" campaign promotes and distributes booster seats. NHTSA was a lead partner in the effort, offering technical assistance and coordination with booster seat distribution activities in the States. The program disseminated thousands of booster seats in its first year (2001) and awarded financial assistance to local organizations to support grassroots booster seat advocacy and distribution activities.
- As part of the "Boost America!" campaign to get children to use booster seats, Ford donated 15,000 seats to Native American youngsters in 17 States.
- NHTSA has a series of partnerships with national not-for-profit organizations that receive NHTSA funding to support the BUA campaign. Many of these cooperative agreements include a stipulation that funded recipients devote significant energy to child passenger safety activities, many of which include local initiatives for increasing booster seat use.
- This past year, NHTSA adapted several child passenger safety publications into Spanish and worked with media outlets to make them available in Spanish-speaking communities.
- The agency will continue to collaborate with educators and child safety advocates who work with Hispanic leaders to develop community-based programs that address booster seat use.
- The NHTSA hotline has contracted with three Spanish-speaking representatives who will respond to phone queries about child passenger safety.

NHTSA's cooperative agreements with national not-for-profit organizations support local initiatives promoting child passenger safety and the use of booster seats.

Research

- The 2000 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey is the fourth in a series of national telephone surveys on occupant protection issues conducted by NHTSA. It consists of two separate questionnaires, each administered to a national sample of about 6,000 persons age 16 and older. The survey asks a subgroup of parents and others who live with children detailed questions about use of child restraints, including the use of booster seats. As this plan goes to press, reports summarizing results of the 2000 survey are being completed and processed for publication.
- The Agency will conduct a follow-up to the 1996 child safety seat misuse study. The new study, to be completed by spring 2003, will be used to assess progress in curtailing child safety seat and booster seat misuse and to develop educational messages targeted at reducing the most dangerous forms of misuse.
- The Agency will conduct research into methods and procedures for conducting a National Survey of Booster Seat Use and design such a survey if it is deemed feasible. Currently, there are no existing procedures for collection of booster seat use data that would result in a nationally representative estimate.

Protecting Our Older Child Passengers

This report contains legislative recommendations to close the gaps in child occupant protection laws.

NHTSA will perform research into the feasibility of conducting a National Survey of Booster Seat Use.

Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213 (49 CFR 571.213)

The Agency is considering several initiatives to more fully evaluate the dynamic performance of booster seats recommended for a wider range of children.

In response to other requirements of the TREAD Act, NHTSA is considering amendments to Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 213, which specifies performance requirements for child restraints. The Agency is considering several initiatives to more fully evaluate the dynamic performance of booster seats recommended for a wider range of children.

Further, the Agency is in the process of developing, in conjunction with the Society of Automotive Engineers, a 10-year-old dummy that is envisioned to be used in the evaluation of booster seats for children weighing approximately 80 pounds.

Assuming amendments to FMVSS 213 are finalized, manufacturers may need to examine current booster seat models and make decisions about developing new ones. This circumstance will provide them with opportunities to produce new booster seats that may be more appealing to children and easier to use in a variety of motor vehicles.

Funding

TEA-21 (P.L. 105-178) authorized programs for fiscal years (FY) 1998 – 2003. States and communities have been applying for a number of highway safety grants that are used in part to promote child passenger safety activities. The grant programs are as follows:

- State & Community Highway Safety Grant Program (23 U.S.C.§402)
- Seat Belt & Occupant Protection Programs (incentive and innovative grant programs) (23 U.S.C.§157)
- Occupant Protection Incentive Grant Program (23 U.S.C.§405)
- Child Passenger Protection Education Grant Program [TEA-21, §2003(b)]. This is the only highway safety grant program dedicated solely to promoting child passenger safety activities. A State may use these grant funds to implement programs that are designed to: (1) prevent deaths and injuries to children; (2) educate the public concerning all aspects of the proper installation of child restraints, appropriate child restraint design, selection, and placement, and harness threading and harness adjustment on child restraints; and (3) train and retrain child passenger safety professionals, police officers, fire and emergency medical personnel, and other educators concerning all aspects of child restraint use. This grant program was originally funded for only 2 years through FY 2001. It was extended through NHTSA's FY 2002 appropriation.

In addition to the grant programs described above, under 23 U.S.C. §403, NHTSA conducts demonstration grant programs to develop new approaches and strategies to reduce motor vehicle related deaths and injuries. Under Section 403, NHTSA awarded six Booster Seat Community Demonstration Grant Programs (FY 2000-2001) totaling approximately \$900,000 for pilot and demonstration programs to implement strategies in the community, to increase booster seat use for children weighing between 40 and 80 pounds.⁷ The demonstration programs also promoted seat belt use for children ages 8 to 15. Messages and activities targeted parents, children, young teens, and diverse populations.

Reauthorization of highway safety funding will occur during the 5-year span of this strategic plan. As the U.S. Department of Transportation develops its reauthorization proposal, the goals and initiatives identified in this report will be taken into consideration.

NHTSA also provides funding and a wide range of other support to the annual Lifesavers Conference. Sessions on booster seat use and issues facing older child passengers are a staple of this conference.

The new recommendation to determine readiness for a booster seat is that all children who have outgrown child safety seats should be properly restrained in booster seats until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4'9" tall.

⁷ At the time of the funding, the agency's policy stated that children between 40 and 80 pounds be secured in a belt-positioning booster seat. The new recommendation to determine readiness for a booster seat is that "all children who have outgrown child safety seats should be properly restrained in booster seats until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4'9" tall."

A National
Movement for
Change—
Implementing
the Strategic
Approach



Citizens from across the country contributed their ideas for this strategic plan in public meetings and through written comments. As described previously, considerable activities, funding, and resources have already been committed to increase awareness and promote the use of booster seats. This section contains specific efforts that individuals representing a variety of public and private sector organizations and groups can undertake.

Congress

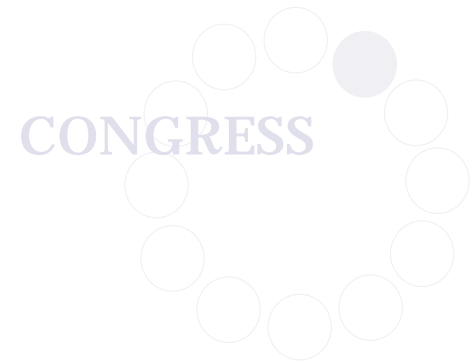
To assist citizens, communities, and States to increase awareness and booster seat use rates, members of Congress can:

- Support State legislation aimed at closing gaps in child occupant protection laws, especially legislation aimed at older children in age/size appropriate child occupant restraints.
- Continue to support the occupant protection portions of the Department of Transportation's fiscal year budget requests.
- Advocate booster seat use publicly and with constituents.
- Actively support and participate in coalitions comprising businesses and national organizations that advance occupant restraint education, legislation, and enforcement.
- Encourage governors and State legislators to pass legislation that requires all children to be placed in age/size appropriate child restraints.
- Place their children in age/size appropriate child occupant restraints.

Federal Government Agencies

The Department of Transportation currently oversees a department-wide initiative to promote seat belt use among all its employees and customers. Agencies throughout the Department regularly disseminate passenger safety messages and support programs that encourage the use of seat belts, child safety seats, and booster seats. Although the mandate for child passenger safety clearly falls under the purview of the Department of Transportation, numerous opportunities exist for other Government agencies to participate in activities to promote the correct progression for child restraint use. The following list, which focuses on the Department of Transportation, includes activities that all Government agencies can undertake (including State and local agencies):

- Implement this plan as a priority program within the agency and all of its regional and district offices.
- Provide assistance to States seeking to enact or strengthen protection for older children in age/size appropriate child occupant restraints.



- Provide financial support and technical assistance to States to support their efforts to actively and visibly enforce their child occupant protection laws.
- Encourage increased participation by private and nonprofit partners to work with NHTSA, or as part of a coalition, to increase booster seat use.
- Encourage health and safety officials in school districts to include the proper use of child restraint systems, especially booster seats, in their health and wellness programs.
- Make training available to public health officers, law enforcement officers, and insurance agency representatives on proper restraint use and appropriate restraint systems.
- Include child passenger safety messages in other child health-related programs and campaigns.
- Encourage Tribal Governments to adopt and actively enforce mandatory child safety seat use laws that include the use of booster seats.
- Support Operation ABC mobilizations and National Child Passenger Safety Week.
- Conduct annual observational and attitudinal surveys to assess public perception of and changes in booster seat use.
- Encourage Medicaid funding and reimbursement for age/size appropriate child restraints.

State and Local Agencies and Organizations

National change takes place at the local level. State and local leaders, along with State Highway Safety Offices, must work together to support legislative change and programs that encourage 4- to 8-year-olds to be placed in booster seats, make booster seats available to all children, and educate parents and other caregivers on the correct progression of occupant restraint use for children. To this end, State and local leaders should work to accomplish the following objectives:

- Educate State leadership about the importance of legislation that requires age/size appropriate occupant protection.
- Adopt comprehensive child occupant protection laws to encourage coverage of all children up to age 16 in all seating positions.
- Assess meaningful penalties for child safety and booster seat violations.
- Build public-private partnerships to develop and execute statewide strategies for raising public awareness and increasing booster seat use.
- Provide resources for the enforcement of all child occupant protection laws.
- Support and coordinate public information and education programs.

- Establish motor vehicle crash databases that capture the use/non-use/misuse of booster seats and measure success.
- Ensure the availability of booster seats for every child.
- Provide technical assistance to ensure that children are properly positioned in correctly installed booster seats.
- Mandate awareness training on child occupant protection for State boards of education.

National Organizations and Coalitions

Many national organizations and coalitions currently support child passenger safety. NHTSA will continue its work with current partner organizations and identify new ones. These organizations share information with members and other constituent groups, develop materials on child passenger safety tailored to the needs of its members, voice public support for child passenger safety, and stimulate grassroots activity on child passenger safety, including booster seat use. This network includes, but is not limited to, the following types of organizations:

- Health and medical organizations and professional associations;
- National and community-based organizations serving various racial and ethnic populations;
- Law enforcement organizations;
- Associations representing lawyers, judges, and prosecutors;
- National traffic safety organizations;
- Faith-based organizations; and
- Industry-related organizations focused on promoting traffic safety among employees and customers.

National organizations and coalitions can participate in this effort to raise awareness about the dangers children face when they ride unrestrained.

They can help promote booster seat use in the following ways:

- Join coalitions with other national organizations to advance child safety and booster seat education, legislation, and enforcement.
- Contact private sector businesses and other local, State, and national organizations to provide information and recruit their involvement.
- Identify needs among members and partners for child passenger safety training and education, provide training and education materials as needed, and establish delivery mechanisms.



- Identify target groups, determine outreach methods, and produce appropriate resource materials. (NHTSA will provide technical assistance, as needed.)
- Develop and support outreach programs and events that provide culturally appropriate information for racial and ethnic populations known to have low rates of child restraint use.

Health and Medical Providers

Health and medical providers play a vital and continuing role in providing counseling to parents and children on many matters of health and safety. Physicians and nurses (especially in pediatric practices), attending hospital staff, emergency room medical staff, school nurses, and others see most children from birth through their immunization periods. During this time, these health care providers are in a unique position to educate parents and other caregivers on the importance of using the appropriate safety restraint system for their children, including the importance of placing 4- to 8-year-olds in booster seats. The health and medical community can support the use of booster seats by adopting the following suggestions:

- Discuss the risk of death and injury in motor vehicle crashes for this age group with parents and other caregivers.
- Discuss the importance of securing children in booster seats with parents and other caregivers.
- Display posters and other information about booster seats and child passenger safety in waiting areas.
- Give parents and other caregivers' educational materials about booster seats and child passenger safety.
- Talk to children about the benefits of booster seats, how “cool” it is to see out the window when in a raised seat, and comfortable because the seat belt fits properly.
- Offer testimony and background information to the media and legislature on the benefits of booster seats.
- Integrate information about booster seats and child passenger safety into developmental examinations as a childhood milestone (e.g., when you bring your child in for his/her 4-year checkup, we will measure him/her to see if it's time for you to purchase a booster seat).
- Collect and analyze emergency room data on injuries caused by the premature graduation of children into adult seat belts.
- Participate in media events as credible spokespersons for child safety.



HEALTH
and Medical
Providers

Child Safety Seat Manufacturers/Automobile Manufacturers/Retailers

Child safety seat manufacturers, automobile manufacturers, and retailers are critical to the success of all national efforts to promote the use of booster seats. They can support the use of booster seats by considering these suggestions:

- Provide booster seats that accommodate children up to 8 years of age, and up to 4 feet 9 inches tall.
- Design and produce booster seats that are comfortable for children.
- Consider styling that would make booster seats attractive to older children.
- Encourage the inclusion of integrated child safety seats in vehicles typically used for transporting children.
- Combine efforts to address the physical compatibility of all child restraints with motor vehicle seating.
- Provide, stock, display, and promote a variety of booster seats for use with lap and shoulder and lap-only seat belts that are affordable for all income groups.

Child Passenger Safety Technicians

More than 32,000 certified child passenger safety technicians have been trained to educate parents and other caregivers about the correct use of child safety seats and booster seats and to ensure their proper installation. Recognizing the low usage rate for booster seats, child passenger safety technicians can help increase their use by carrying out the following activities:

- Remind parents of younger children that when their children reach age 4, they should properly use booster seats.
- Talk to children about the benefits of booster seats and how “cool” it is to be able to see out the window when they are in a raised seat.
- Offer testimony and background information to the media and legislature on the benefits of booster seats.
- Provide community presentations on the imperative for placing children in booster seats.
- Educate daycare and after school providers about booster seats and the appropriate progression of occupant restraint use.

Child Safety
Seat and
Automobile

MANUFACTURERS
and RETAILERS

Child Passenger Safety
TECHNICIANS

- Work to integrate information about booster seat use into law enforcement outreach programs that discuss safety for elementary school children.
- Work with existing and new partners to establish fitting/inspection stations.

Media

National and local media organizations have shown strong support for child passenger safety programs. It is time to build on that support by educating the media and obtaining their buy-in (even in States that have gaps in their existing laws) for placing 4- to 8-year-olds in booster seats. The access that broadcast, print, and out-of-home media have will be critical to getting the word out about the risks associated with children riding unrestrained. In addition to requesting publicity through their broadcast, print, and out-of-home channels, NHTSA will make a point of requesting the placement of information about booster seats and child passenger safety on their Web sites. Suggestions for media activities supporting booster seat use are as follows:

- Cover special events and press conferences during CPS Week and Operation ABC mobilizations.
- Air video and audio news releases on child passenger safety and booster seats.
- Develop feature stories for health and style magazine sections.
- Run editorials on the need for upgrading child occupant protection laws to protect 4- to 8-year-olds by placing them in booster seats.
- Conduct call-in shows and interviews with local experts on child passenger safety.
- Publish consumer advisories on new NHTSA publications on booster seat use.
- Feature child safety seat checkpoints and fitting/inspection stations and list on community calendars.
- Include child safety seat and booster seat public service messages throughout programming.
- Take advantage of high-quality Ad Council media kits.
- Air a radio broadcast from a fitting/inspection station.

Educators

The community of public and private school educators encompasses preschool and elementary school teachers and their assistants, school administrators and their staff, boards of education, and other professionals and volunteers. Individually and collectively, members of these groups can help prevent death and injuries by participating in and initiating activities that promote the use of child occupant restraints. Opportunities for involvement are as follows:

EDUCATORS

- Display posters about booster seats in classrooms and at the entrances to school buildings.
- Integrate information about booster seat use into discussions on health and safety.
- Invite child passenger safety technicians to speak to children about booster seats.
- Host presentations on booster seat use during parent-teacher activities and school fairs.
- Support legislation that upgrades child occupant protection laws to include booster seats.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement agencies and professional associations have actively supported child passenger safety through enforcement, training, and public education. Additional and expanded activities for their involvement are presented below:

- Train additional officers as child passenger safety technicians so they can educate others within their agencies and drivers on the correct use of child restraints and booster seats.
- Continue to enforce all occupant protection laws.
- Initiate new outreach activities to educate parents and other caregivers about appropriate child restraint use.
- Work with the media to publicize information about crashes in which children are not restrained or not properly restrained.
- Serve on local child passenger safety advocacy task forces and coalitions.
- Actively participate in Operation ABC mobilizations.

Businesses

As responsible corporate citizens, businesses know that safe, healthy families are good for business. Through internal and external communications, businesses can help educate employees, customers, and the public at large. Businesses can promote the use of booster seats and child occupant protection in many ways:

- Support comprehensive child occupant protection laws.
- Support enforcement of all occupant protection laws.
- Communicate child safety seat use messages to customers and employees.
- Join in coalitions with other businesses and national organizations (or affiliates) to advance child safety seat education, legislation, and enforcement.

Law
ENFORCEMENT

BUSINESSES

- Contribute resources (both direct funding and in-kind services) to support outreach activities and public information and enforcement efforts.
- Join Safe Communities coalitions.
- Post and distribute information to customers and employees about booster seats.
- Request that health insurance representatives talk to employees about booster seats when they present information about company health insurance plans.
- Host a child passenger safety checkup event for employees.

Private Citizens

Because young children are unable to protect themselves, parents and other caregivers must take responsibility for placing them in age/size appropriate occupant restraints, and seating them in the back seat where they are the safest. However, as children get older, parents and other caregivers can begin educating them about the importance of occupant restraints and should involve them in selecting a booster seat. All adult citizens can promote child passenger safety by doing the following:

- Always wear a seat belt and serve as a role model.
- When children ride in a motor vehicle, secure them properly in a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt depending on their age, height, and weight.
- Place children in the safest part of the vehicle—the back seat.
- Never start the vehicle until everyone is buckled.
- Seek assistance if you are unsure about the correct way to secure a child in a child safety seat or booster seat or about their proper installation in a motor vehicle.
- Encourage elementary schools to include information about booster seats and seat belts when they talk about health and safety.
- Let children help select a booster seat.
- Talk to children about the increased comfort and ability to see out the window when they sit in a booster seat.

Private
CITIZENS

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